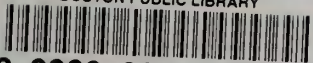


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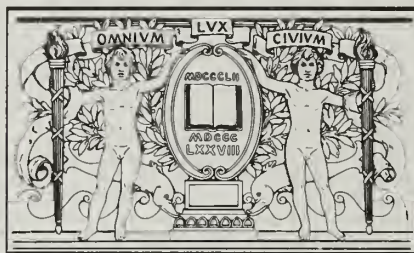
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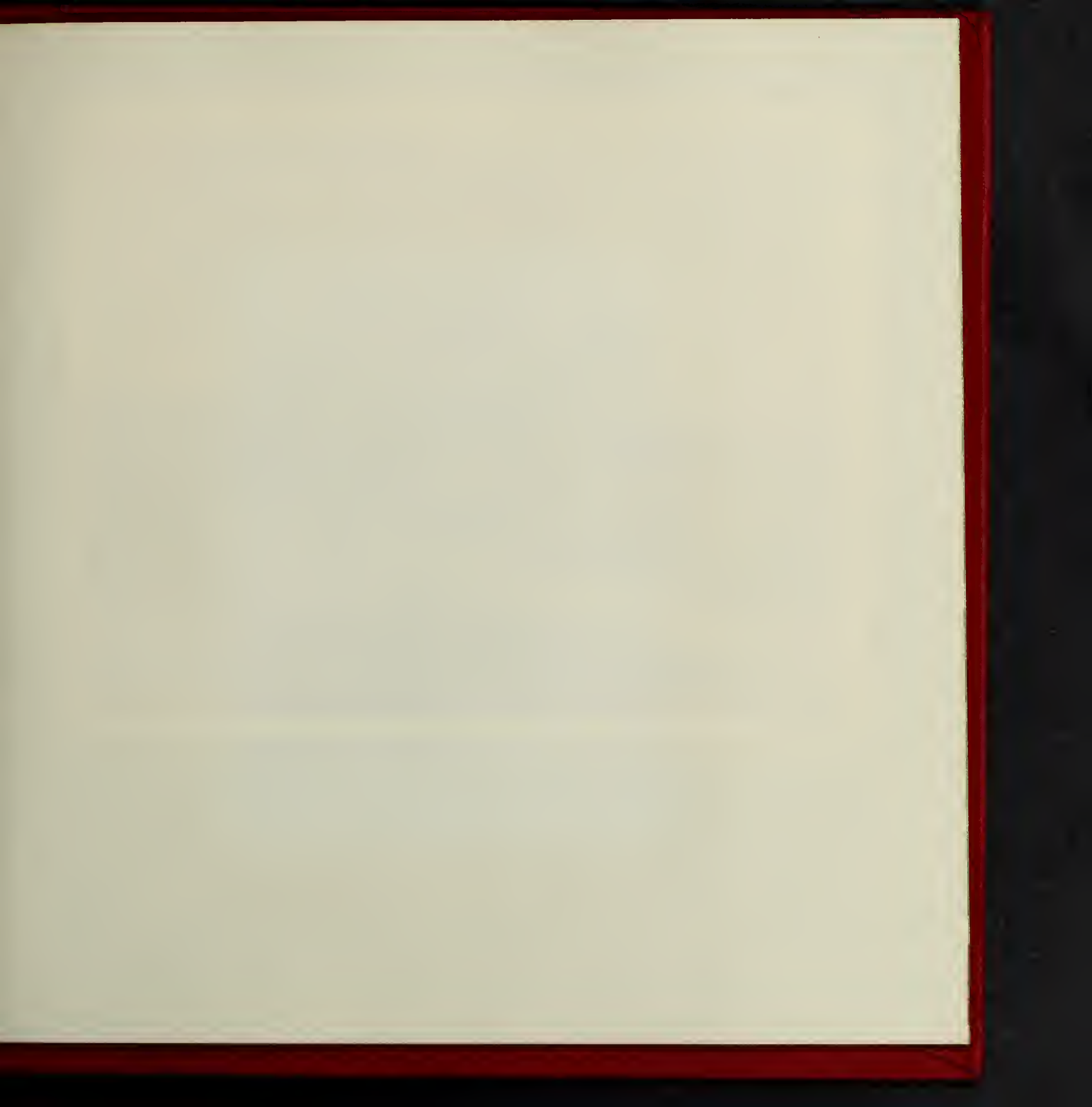


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Mission Hill

BOSTON 200 NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY SERIES



HENRY ADAMS, the nineteenth century philosopher, said that the history of America is not the history of the few, but the history of the many. The people of Boston's neighborhoods accepted the challenge of Adam's statement to produce "people's histories" of their own communities. Hundreds of Bostonians formed committees in each of fifteen neighborhoods of the city, volunteering their time the past year and a half to research in libraries, search for photographs, produce questionnaires, transcribe tapes, assist in writing and editing. The most important, act as interviewees and subjects of "oral history" research. These booklets are not traditional textbook histories, and we have not attempted to cull a statistical sample. We have simply talked with our neighbors, people who remember sometimes with fondness, sometimes with regret, but always with wisdom. For each of us has his or her own story to tell, and these stories are vital to the development of our neighborhoods and our city.

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Boston 200 is the city's official program to observe the Bicentennial of the American Revolution from April 1976 through December 1976.

KEVIN H. WHITE, Mayor
KATHARINE D. KANE,
President, The Boston 200 Corporation
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MISSION HILL

LEO POWER was born on Parker Hill in the northern tip of Roxbury in 1898, the son of Canadian-Irish immigrants. Seventy-seven years later he still lives in the neighborhood. During his lifetime, this small district of Boston has changed from a closely knit Irish community built around the Mission Church to a heterogeneous neighborhood which is fighting for its survival against transiency and expansion by some of the largest medical and educational institutions in Boston. Leo Power's life is representative of the experiences of many long-time residents of the Hill; through his story, it is possible to trace the evolution of the parish and his neighborhood, which became known as Mission Hill in the 1920s when the Mission Church High School athletic teams spread the name across the city. Mission Hill offers its inhabitants a weave of social relationships with city communities can match.

Leo's parents, Michael and Julia Power, left St. John's, New Brunswick, for Boston in the early 1870s, trading the farms and the fishing for a city where Michael could use his skills as a blacksmith. The Powers were among the first Irish on Parker Hill, arriving shortly after Roxbury annexed itself to Boston in 1867. Several Yankee-owned estates dating from the

colonial era still covered the slopes of Parker Hill, giving it a rural flavor despite the German families which had recently clustered around the base of the Hill to work in the many breweries there.

Parker Hill had attracted prosperous settlers throughout colonial times because it offered a unique view of Boston and the surrounding countryside. When people first inhabited the area, it was a peninsula bordered by the Muddy River, the Back Bay, and Stony Brook. As late as the 1820s, according to Francis Drake:

Roxbury was a suburban village with a single narrow street, and dotted with farms, many of which still remained in the hands of descendants of their original proprietors. The town was concentrated in Roxbury Street, all the rest was country.

In the late 1860s Boston extended street railway service and sewerage systems to Roxbury, and the Irish working class poured into undeveloped suburban areas like Parker Hill.

In 1869 the Catholic Redemptorist Fathers acquired the old Brinley house and estate, five acres of land along Tremont Street on Parker Hill. There they founded a mission church and dedicated a shrine to Our Lady of Perpetual Help; the Brinley home served

FRONT COVER: *Horse drawn trolley in front of Mission Church, Tremont Street 1890*

BACK COVER: *The baseball team lighting vigil candles, c.1950*



*The Brinley Mansion
(Datchett House) served
as the first
Rectory for Mission Ch*

as the rectory until its demolition in 1902. In 1871 the priests offered their first Masses and conducted remarkably successful missions which attracted huge numbers of worshippers to the church. The Powers attended these Masses along with their newly arrived Irish neighbors, and Julia Power sang in the choir of the small frame church.

In 1877, the Powers had their first child, Joseph. They had thirteen children in all, seven boys and six girls. They moved frequently, in search of larger quarters, but always stayed near the Mission Church. Michael found work in some of the biggest steel shops around greater Boston. All seven boys became ironworkers, although one was eventually ordained a priest. Joseph worked for the Boston Elevated Railway and was the assistant superintendent on the construction of the Washington Street El in 1890.

As the Power family grew, so did the Catholic population of Parker Hill. Low-cost frame houses were built by speculators along the slopes of the Hill, especially during the 1885-1895 building boom. A stone church accommodating 4,000 worshippers replaced the original wooden building of the Mission Church in 1878, five years later the Diocese created a parish around the church to minister to the burgeoning Catholic population. A church grammar school, staffed by the Sisters of Notre Dame, opened its doors in 1899, within a decade, 2,000 children from the Mission Church Irish were students there.

When Leo Power, the twelfth of the Power children was born on Oswald Street in 1898, Parker Hill was a homogeneous Irish Catholic community which looked to the Mission Church for guidance. Triple-deck houses had been built about three-quarters of the way



*Coleman's Quarry
opposite the Mission Church,
c. 1878*

Parker Hill to Hillside Street, and as far west as
Street. Above Hillside Street was a cow farm and
are, a reservoir, and a small building which since
had housed the New England Baptist Hospital.
ere were some houses on Wait Street and a few more
e far end of the Hill near Parker Hill Avenue, but
etween was Gray's field, an orchard filled with
trees and apple trees, which ran all the way from
ide Street down to Huntington Avenue. An old
ial house had been torn down, leaving only its
ation. At the corner of Huntington Avenue and
met Street was a big brownstone wall with a high
py gate. Behind it was the old Huntington Estate.
outh side of the Hill, from Fisher Avenue down,
part of the Blessed Sacrament Parish which had

separated from the Mission Church Parish in 1892, and
extended to Centre Street in Jamaica Plain. The first
houses appeared there between 1892 and 1905. In the
teens there were more than 120 houses on Bickford and
Fisher avenues, Wensley, Bucknam, Lawn, Estey, and
Ellingwood streets. The Resthaven Nursing Home, a
black-owned facility, located itself along Fisher Ave-
nue in 1920.

Across Huntington Avenue were open fields where
the circus kept its horses when it came to Boston each
year. Most of the streets throughout the neighborhood
were unpaved. Sidewalks, where they existed, were
made of two two-by-ten foot wooden planks which pro-
tected pedestrians from mud and manure.

Leo's childhood was full of sports and games and the



Band in the garden behind Mission Church.

fields on the Hill were his playgrounds. Here he and his friends played baseball and football, tag, rush, and re-leavo. Running was popular and the children of the neighborhood gradually filled in the foundation of the old house and used it as a racetrack.

After 1910, the fields on the Hill gradually disappeared in the wake of another building boom, during which new houses and more hospitals were constructed. The Huntington Estate and Gray's field were covered with more tightly packed three-deckers. A tube

ulosis hospital was built adjacent to the reservoir on top of the Hill in 1908. In 1914 the reservoir was drained and the construction of the Robert Breck Brigham Hospital started. Leo and his friends began to wander over to the Brookline Avenue and Columbus Avenue playgrounds for recreation.

But the Mission Church was the heart of the community when Leo was young, and provided comprehensive religious, educational, and social activities for all members of the parish throughout their lives. Masses were heavily attended; they began at five in the morning and continued until noontime, following one after the other on the hour, each one packed. Leo went to Mass two or three times each week, often with his class at the Mission Grammar School.

St. Alphonsus Hall was built by the church in 1900 and became the headquarters for the multitude of activities sponsored by the St. Alphonsus Association, a men's athletic club whose membership numbered upwards of 1,300. Besides using the gymnasium and bowling facilities, members of the Association organized lectures, card games, pool and billiards tournaments, an orchestra, mandolin and glee clubs, and a dramatic club. Athletic teams for football, basketball, track and bell-racing competed in Catholic leagues throughout New England.

Upstairs in St. Alphonsus Hall a huge theater, seating 1,142 people, housed the flourishing theatrical activities of the parish. *Pilate's Daughter*, a popular Lenten drama written by one of the Mission priests in 1901, was performed there every spring for over 60 years to "standing-room-only" audiences from all over New England. From his first year of grammar school, Leo's classes participated in plays that were directed by the priests. Upon graduation from grammar school each class performed a play, using the various theatrical skills they had been learning for the past eight years. Leo received his musical instruction from the priests and nuns and, later, from members of the Musicians' Union who volunteered with the Mission Church Field

Band. He joined the Church choir when he was in the fourth grade and continued to sing in the choir for 34 years. He and his brothers each joined the Cadets when they turned eleven, graduated to the Fife and Drum Corps, and eventually to the Mission Church Band. Activities were more restricted for the girls, centering in the Guild of Our Lady, a social club which offered instruction and recreation through literary, musical, and dressmaking courses.

In 1911, when he was 13 and still in grammar school, Leo had his first job. For \$2.50 a week he helped print the theater programs for B. F. Keith's Vaudeville House. It was on the A circuit, the biggest in the country, and working there Leo could see all the headliners in vaudeville—Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson and Eileen Stanley, among others.

Most of the kids he went to school with started work young and often stayed with their first jobs all their lives. Many were firemen in the breweries. Others got jobs with the city or the MTA. When he graduated from Mission Grammar, unlike most of his peers, Leo went to Boston College High School in the South End and then on to Holy Cross and Boston College. School over, Leo worked on the renovation of the Robert Breck Brigham Hospital, which the government had used as a veteran's facility during World War I and returned to private control in 1921. In 1923, he went to work for the MTA in Charlestown as a structural ironworker. He stayed with the job for 40 years, until he retired in 1963. In the early years, until he got seniority with the union, work was not steady. During slack seasons Leo worked in various ironwork shops around Boston. In 1926, when the parish built the Mission High School from funds donated by the parishioners, Leo was working at his brother Joseph's shop. Joseph was commissioned to make the iron fence around the new school, and all the Power brothers helped to build it.

Leo married in 1925 and lived with his wife, Julia, on Cherokee Street. After one and a half years of mar-



age and one child, Julia died. Leo remarried in 1934. He and his second wife, Margaret, moved to Jamaica Plain for seven years, but returned with their five children to Mission Hill and rejoined his brothers and sisters. They found a home on Francis Street near the Peter Bent Brigham and have lived on the street for over thirty years.

During the '30s, '40s and '50s the church remained the center of the Mission Hill community. Involvement with the Mission Church did not isolate the Mission Hill community from city and state politics, however. The Irish had gained control of Boston city government in the first decades of the century, when Leo Power was a young man. The new politics, with its festive outdoor rallies and carefully devised local organizations, captured his imagination. During the mayoral election of 1921, he worked for James Michael Curley, who won a close fight with John Murphy from Charlestown.

Leo continued working to elect Democrats. When the city councillor from Ward 10, whom he had supported in 1925, voted for a Republican for Council President, Leo decided to run against him. He won the election in 1927, but lost on a recount. Two years later his supporters spread the work that his opponent had won the previous election and he easily won himself several terms on the Council. He was 31 years old. As a city councillor one of his major undertakings was to pave streets on Parker Hill "accepted" by the Street Commission so that the City would pave the roads and put out sidewalks and curbstones. He also had the City build a playground on top of the Hill. The Parker Hill branch library was just a small store across the street from the present location until Leo submitted an order to the City Council asking the mayor to build a new structure.

But the guts of politics was in party organization and when his tenure on the council ended Leo worked with Maurice Tobin, who had served as a state representative beginning in 1926. Tobin was born and

raised in the Mission Parish and in 1937, the first year he beat Curley for mayor, a huge rally was staged outside of the Tobin house in Calumet Square. Once in office, Tobin appointed Leo Superintendent of Buildings for the City of Boston. When Tobin ran for governor in 1945 Leo helped organize the statewide campaign. He kept up his interest in politics through the Second World War, when he returned to ironworking to make a living.

Little changed in Mission Hill for many years. Despite the postwar affluence and the general trend to the suburbs, the community was stable and reaping the rewards of the institutions it had built. In September 1954, Pope Pius XII proclaimed Mission Church a basilica and dedication ceremonies were held in December of that year. The Mission Hill Housing Projects were erected in 1940 and quickly became assimilated into the parish. An extension was added in 1952 but it remained apart from the larger community, since it was across the street and out of the parish.

Then, in 1958, the Boston Redevelopment Authority announced an interest in building high-rise apartments on Huntington Avenue, near the Mission Church. What was originally described by the BRA to the rector of the church, Father Renahan, as "low-cost modern housing," materialized in 1962 as a 24-story luxury tower with one- and two-bedroom units whose rents started at \$150 a month. Two other high rental high-rises followed. Over 700 people lost their homes when the three-family houses were destroyed to make room for the new apartments.

At the same time Harvard University completed plans to build an Affiliated Hospital Complex (AHC) and began to purchase houses in the Fenwood Road/Francis Street area in 1963. But the community was still cohesive and very few of the 182 homeowners sold to Harvard. Those who did got very good prices for their three-deckers and usually remained in their apartments as tenants. However, by 1965 the three high-rises had replaced a substantial segment of the

parish population and the recently integrated Mission Hill Projects were the source of severe racial tension despite peaceable invocations from the church pulpit. Families became more willing to sell to Harvard for the even higher prices offered to them. In the late '60s Harvard tore down some houses and evicted families, renting instead to people who could afford higher rents, predominantly students and other transients. These two instances of institutional encroachment dealt a serious blow to the permanence of the Irish community in Mission Hill.

The homogeneous Irish Catholic community in which Leo Power grew up and has lived out most of his life barely remains. "The nearest thing to community that I know of that's active is the American Legion at the Mission Hill Post. The St. Alphonsus Club was the greatest men's club in New England. You couldn't get 15 people today. I remember when you couldn't get in the church to Masses. And the St. Alphonsus Hall breaks your heart when you go through it. No, I don't see anything along the line of the old community that I knew."

One hundred years after the Power family settled here, the Mission Hill community is once again in flux. Strong pressures from a variety of sources have encouraged residents whose parents and grandparents made a community around the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help to leave their homes. Yet the neighborhood has not been abandoned; it is attracting new tenants and even new homeowners. Despite problems in the past few years, Mission Hill remains a close, family-oriented community.

The church has lost its primacy in the neighborhood, but is still central to many of the old parishioners. A new community, more ethnically and economically diverse, comprised of the original Irish population, and blacks, Spanish, and young working people is forming out of a mutual effort to preserve and improve the neighborhood. Formally, through various community-based organizations, and informally, as

the diverse elements living on and about the Hill meet on the streets and around one another's kitchen table, new life is being breathed into Mission Hill. But the survival of the neighborhood will depend, finally, upon its success in redirecting the energies of the neighborhood institutions from wanton expansion and land speculation to cooperation with the community.

The friction stems from the conflicting needs of the many nearby hospitals and schools, and the residential neighborhood. The hospitals have always provided jobs for vast numbers of Mission Hill residents, as well as vital medical care, but recently they also have caused disruption in the community. Because of outdated and inefficient facilities, the hospitals want to modernize and consolidate in order to provide better health care. Until recently, the medical institutions did not consider the effects of expansion on the Mission Hill community, but local opposition has insured community involvement in future plans. The various parties involved in the controversy still disagree about the best ways to improve health care—through expanded more centralized hospital facilities or through preventive, community-based programs—and about how to regulate institutional expansion in residential neighborhoods. These issues have been priorities for Mission Hill residents for over a decade.

As early as 1961 Mission Hillers banded together in an attempt to influence the BRA's plans for the Whitney Street high-rises. The Mission United Neighborhood Improvement Team (MUNIT) failed to seriously alter the design or costs of the apartment building. However, in 1964, MUNIT organized a rally of 3,000 neighborhood residents, featuring the Mission Church Field Band, at the State House to prevent passage of a bill that would have authorized an expansion of the Mass. Mental Health Center at the expense of homes on Fenwood Road.

Residents of the Francis Street/Fenwood Road area were surprised when they received eviction notices from Harvard during the winter of 1968-1969; some



The Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, 1920

ere determined not to leave their homes. The tenants joined forces with some Harvard student activists who new of and opposed the Affiliated Hospital Complex. Together they canvassed the streets and organized the Roxbury Tenants of Harvard. From its beginnings, when it secured a promise from Harvard Medical School's Dean Ebert that "no residential demolition will occur until a similar amount of replacement housing at comparable rents and located in nearby areas, is available for those families to be relocated," RTH has developed into an assertive community advocate, actively planning and developing the Mission Park apartments, unique mixed-income family housing.

People on the Hill have formed similar coalitions to tackle problems of inadequate police protection, poor lighting, insufficient recreational facilities for children, and the suspension of home delivery and repair services by private companies. In 1969 people determined to obtain low-cost quality health care for the community formed the Mission Hill Health Movement. The destruction of houses by various institutions prompted residents to unite in the three-year-old Back of the Hill Association, which, like RTH, is designing and hoping to build affordable family dwelling units. Just two years ago residents created an elected community body empowered to deal with land-use issues and recognized by the City, the Mission Hill Planning Commission. Foremost among its concerns has been the threatened destruction of the AHC with attendant plans for a

power plant and parking garage. The unique coalition of people who comprise these various neighborhood organizations—old Mission Hill family people, a few elderly, and the recently arrived young people—publishes the *Good News*, a monthly paper whose content is as varied as the community it serves.

Mission Hill is a small city neighborhood with about 15,000 residents. But people who have lived in Mission Hill all their lives and people who are just now making it their home, are witnessing a rebirth in their community. Mission Hill has a spirit that draws people together and forges bonds among them. This community identity has been strong since the Redemptorists first built the Mission Church and has so far survived the fear and paralysis that elsewhere accompany the urban crisis of the 1960s and 1970s. In the pages that follow, residents of Mission Hill, young and old, affirm that spirit as they relate their memories, their concerns, and their hopes for Mission Hill.

GERTRUDE HENDERSON is a warm, kind, grey-haired woman who has spent her life in Mission Hill. The Mission Church is still the center of her life:

"I was baptized in Mission Church, it's over 70 years that I've been here. When we were kids there was no Stockwell Street, there was no house here. This was a field. There were three fields up top of the Hill and we used to call them the Sleigh Field, the Cow Field, the Daisy Field. We used to slide down over Parker Hill in



Back Bay from Parker Hill Reservoir, 1878

the winter on the top of our mothers' tin boilers, that they used to boil the clothes in on the stove. And then Branley's milk concern was there; they must have had about 30 or 40 cows.

"We called Brigham Circle 'the Switch', because they used to switch cars there. One car used to go all the way out, but one went just to the Switch; they'd turn the switch, and then go in town again. There was a belt line at Roxbury Crossing. That car would take you all around town for five cents. We'd just go in town, 'round the North Station, and it'd bring us back. They'd dump us off at Dudley Street and we had to walk home. This was our Sunday's visit, for a nickel.

"My mother and father came years and years ago. They were both from Ireland. My father was a bricklayer. My father and mother died when we were very

young. We were four kids. My sister and I were twins we were seventeen when my mother died. We all separated. We went to live with different people—aunt and relatives, until we got married. One brother went to St. Louis and he married, so he stayed there. But my other brother lived here in Boston and we stayed together. Where we lived wasn't far from each other. Our family was very close.

"This house is 40 years old. It's a big place to be living alone. But the view I have in front is nice. At night the city is lit up and looks just like New York. I've stayed here because I love it. People were moving out of here because of the class of people that was coming in. But I always figured it this way; we had the shrine it was a virgin shrine down here in Mission Church. And I always figured that if Roxbury and the Mission

Church was good enough for the Blessed Mother's Shrine, it was good enough for me."

PAUL McCARTHY of Calumet Street used to run a local milk-delivery service, which was started by his father. He is 70 years old and has always lived on Mission Hill. Recently, he has been active in the opposition to the Affiliated Hospitals Complex:

"Oh, we live much better today—if you understand what I mean. With our modern conveniences and our electric lights and the heated home. Years ago it was a hot air furnace or parlor stoves. I don't think I'd want to go back to the olden days, except for one thing, the violence. When I was a young fella you could go out, walk up the streets at two o'clock in the morning, three o'clock—nobody bothered you.

"The oldtimers were a hardy people, all immigrants. They knew what hard times were. They didn't expect anything for nothing and didn't want anything for nothing; all they wanted was an opportunity to work. Give them a job and don't bother them and let them live in peace and raise their families and they were happy.

"My family came to this country right after the Civil War, and I had grand uncles that were in the Civil War. They had settled in Marlboro. They brought my father here. Those days the Civil War veterans could almost pick what they wanted. They were in the contracting business. They would come down to Boston and wait for the boats to come in with the immigrants. They'd bring them up to Marlboro to work in the shoe factories.

"My father went into steam engineering. He picked up experience when he was in Marlboro—contracting, road building, laying sewers, putting in pipes. My father wanted to live near his work and transportation was a big problem. That's why he settled down here. He figured that if there wasn't work in the city there was no work anywhere. And my mother had a cousin and there were a few old friends here.

"Pretty well-to-do class of people lived on Fenwood

Road, Francis Street. That was high class. Even when I was a kid they got big rents there, \$35 or \$40 a month. If a house went up for sale over there it was gobbled like that. I had some relatives who lived down there. We had a house on Fenwood and all the front hallways were nothing but oak panelling. And bird's eye maple floors. Those floors were a novelty. They paid more for the floors. The disadvantage was that there was no room between the houses. If those houses were built far enough apart, where people could park their own car, you wouldn't sell 'em for love or money if you owned one.

"There was a brewery around here. When the breweries made the beer there was a nice scent, very pleasant odor. If you had an east wind you'd get it up this far. There were beer horses and they had stables and the horses were kept immaculate. They'd be brushed down every night. You know how kids go for horses—we'd brush the leather harness with the brass trim and washed the wagon. We'd go up to the Blacksmith's shop and see them shoeing the horses. We used to get the smell of ether that would be coming from the operating room of one of the hospitals once in a while, the Robert Bent. After a while all that disappeared."

JOHN J. CONNOLLY recently retired as Associate Director of the Boston Public Library. He is an aging man with a warm charm. His fondest memories are of the Branley family herding their dairy cows down the hill to graze in a field where the Beth Israel Hospital is now. Here he recounts other childhood impressions:

"Back in the twenties and the thirties I lived on Oswald Street. In the course of 15 years only one or two families moved out. Mission Hill was very quiet—a content and neighborly neighborhood. We knew all the people who lived in the surrounding area.

"The center of the lives of the people on the Hill was the Mission Church because most of the people were Catholics. Mission Hill saw itself as distinct from the other side of the Hill, which was Jamaica Plain. The

dividing line was Parker Hill Avenue. If you lived on the other side of the Hill—Fisher Avenue on down—the people on our side had little to do with you.

“Men had their own little businesses. There were peddlers and, of course, there were the perpetual visits of the ice man. If the ICE card was placed in the window he would carry the piece of ice on his back up two or three flights of stairs and place it in the icebox.

“I can recall in the early twenties when the fire apparatus headquarters was located on Longwood Avenue at Brookline Avenue. The apparatus was pulled by mammoth horses. The drivers sat on top of the ladder truck. The horses galloped up Sachem Street up the hill, and a man in back threw coal into a great steamer to get the steam to pump water. By the time the firemen got to the fire there was enough pressure to pump water onto the fire.

“Elections were a real exciting time of the year. There were candidates from both sides of the Hill, as Ward 10 covered both sides. The people on the Mission Hill side would loyally vote for whoever was running for political office on their side. Crowds would gather anywhere for a rally where the speakers stood on the back of a truck to state their case.

“People started to move from the Mission Hill area when the Great Depression ended. Younger people showed a tendency to move away from the neighborhood when they married and moved to single-family houses. I left in 1940, so you see I’ve been gone for quite a while.”

JOHN AND CLAIRE CONWAY are practically a fixture on Mission Hill. Conway's Market, which closed just three years ago, supplied a lot more than food to its customers and Mrs. Conway always had a word for anyone who wanted advice.

MR. CONWAY—“I’ll be 81 in June, the 24th, and married 53 years the 21st of June. My family came to the Hill in April, 1894. They came from Brookline, where they had a grocery store. Mother and Father took a walk one Sunday over here and down the bot-

tom of the Hill there was a big sign across Calume Street (which wasn’t Calumet yet, just a path) ‘Parker Hill Reservation.’ They took a walk up. There was only one house there. They were building ours and my parents saw that there was going to be a store there. They liked the house, so they inquired and they found that Tom O’Leary was building it. They got ahold of Tom O’Leary and checked the price of it. People were going to move to the Hill now, they were going to build up there now, it would be a nice place for a store. So they agreed to this price and they got rid of Brookline.”

MRS. CONWAY—“I was born in Somerville, but I came here when I was two years of age. In fact, Father Frawley at Mission Church sent for Pa. Pa was the head of the Boston Elevated electricity unit. Father Frawley wanted to start up the plant here, which he did. All the electricity on Mission Hill was started by Pa. He was the only one in Massachusetts with a first class electrical engineer’s license at the time.”

MR. CONWAY—“I can tell you a story about the hospitals. There’s the Robert Brigham and the Peter Brigham. They left a will that these hospitals were for the needy of Roxbury. Peter Hogan got sick and he went over to the Robert Breck at the top of the Hill. When they were letting him out, they handed him a bill, and he raised Cain. He took the bill and he tore it up. There was a sign up, ‘Left for the needy of Roxbury.’ And he blasted them out and said, ‘if you don’t believe me, I’ll go in and demand a copy of that will.’ And Peter turned around and walked out.”

FATHER JOHN ANDERSON AND SISTER ALICE KATHERINE grew up on Whitney, Francis and Kempton streets, the oldest children in a family of five. Father Anderson left Mission Hill for the seminary when he was 13 years old and Sister Alice entered the convent at 18. Both have served over 20 years in the Mission Parish.

FATHER JOHN ANDERSON—“I think the relationship between the church and the community has changed

EA is a luxury

Within the reach of most every one, but these hard times we realize (from the frequent demands made on us) that a great many do not have the means to possess this luxury. We have given away large quantities of tea this winter, and will continue to do so until times are better. If the readers of this paper know of any one in needy circumstances they can at least help them to have a good cup of tea by cutting out this page and giving it to some needy one, who, on presenting it at our store, will receive a package of tea that will invigorate the system and put new life into them.

UNITED STATES TEA CO.,

1313 Tremont Street,

BOSTON.

ARMSTRONG & ANDERSON.

over the years because the complexion of the parish has changed."

SISTER ALICE KATHERINE—"Until 30 years ago people were permanent residents. Their whole life centered around the parish. It didn't matter what activity was going on, they were involved."

FATHER—"We got involved with family problems. There was a man on house duty and he was called down when anyone came in with a problem. He'd give them what advice he could. Many times there were requests for emergency help, and that was handled through the St. Vincent de Paul Society. There were marital problems, drinking problems, problems with children not going to school.

"When I was first here in 1945, I was hospital chaplain, and I still said daily Mass in church. I heard confessions at regular times and gave out communion. I would go around to the elderly people in the parish once a month and bring them communion."

SISTER—"There is still that close relationship between priests and the people. People still come here for help."

FATHER—"We have more transients living in the parish now, studying at the Public Health School, interning in the hospitals, and studying at the various universities and nursing schools. They're only here for two or three years and they do not develop a close association."

SISTER—"The church is trying to reach out to all these different groups, but there's a bigger turnover than there was even ten years ago. There's a complete change in the attendance of the grammar school. It's one of the best integrated schools in the city of Boston. In the grammar school we have Spanish, black, Cuban, the original Irish, and Chinese kids. We have an almost 50-50 population—50% white and 50% other nationalities. We were once an all-white school.

"In the high school we have 400 students. Many are from the area and many are not. Many of their parents graduated from Mission High. This year, we found a

greater appreciation of the high school because of the unrest in the public schools. But when you project the number of families that are moving out and the residential areas of the parish diminishing, you wonder how many children will be here ten years from now.”

SISTER—“There may be as many residents in the parish but there won’t be a school population. Take the three high-rises. In that area—St. Alphonsus Street, Whitney Street—there were easily 200 youngsters of school age, even 15 years ago. And the same with Francis Street. I think it was the spirit of the Redemptorists and the Sisters of Notre Dame that reached out to the people of the parish—that’s why you got that tremendous loyalty. The priests and nuns were wrapped up in the people of the parish, whatever they could do for their improvement. That closeness went out from the priests to people in the neighborhood.”

TOM AND NORA BREEN serve on the Mission Church Parish Council and are active members of many church organizations even though they have lived in West Roxbury for the past five years.

TOM—“My grandparents came from Ireland back in 1870. They were married in South Boston. My father was born there. When my grandmother became widowed they moved to Smith Street in Mission Hill. Then my grandmother built the third house to be built on Francis Street, the house at number 20. When my father married he settled around Egleston Square, but when I was a little tyke we lived at 37 Hillside Street. When I was about six we moved back into the family homestead on Francis Street and some of the family lived there until the early 1960s”

NORA—“My parents came directly to Boston from Ireland, and following their marriage, settled on the Hill, where I was born. My family, the O’Meary’s, lived in different apartments in the area before I married. The family was active in the parish for 50 years. All my life, I have been active in just about everything

except the church choir. I met Tom when we were working at the parish beano parties during the ’30s. We continued our courtship through several seasons of *Pilate’s Daughter*, in which I was the vestal virgin and Tom an usher-stagehand.”

TOM—“Nora and I got married in 1940 and moved to Dorchester because they had just torn down the buildings behind the church to build the Mission Hill Housing Project, we couldn’t find a place to live. It broke our hearts to leave. After a year and a half we found a place up on Parker Hill Terrace. When I came out of the service we bought a home on Allegheny Street, where we spent 22 years. A few years ago we moved out here to West Roxbury. But our ties are so strong that one of us is in the Mission Hill area every day of the week, working on parish and community activities.

“The shrine at Mission Church, the Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, binds the people of the Hill together. Nobody knows the origin of the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. It was brought out for public veneration in the mid-nineteenth century and entrusted to the Redemptorists with the request that they spread devotion to Our Lady, which they have done all over the world. There were six copies made; one came to Boston and was enshrined in Mission Church.

“My own involvement in the parish dates way back. Fifty years ago when I was in the Mission Grammar School I sang in the boys’ choir. Through the choir I got active in minstrel shows, plays, and musicals at St. Alphonsus Hall. In high school I ushered Wednesdays in novena services. After World War II we raised funds for scholarships and athletics for the high school alumni association. Nora was a den mother for the Boy Scouts and active in the Girl Scouts.

“All nine of our children have belonged to the band and the Band Parents had a strong organization.

“About 12 years ago I got the idea of having a credit union in Mission Church Parish as a source of inexpensive financing for people. It’s operating now over ten



Alphonsus Gym, c. 1915

ars. We started with \$200, and now we have assets
over \$100,000. The interest goes to the shareholders
and all members get free life insurance.

'I still attend services at the Mission Church. The
rest of the family goes to church out in West Roxbury

where the church is scattered with former residents of
Mission Hill. We always talk about Mission Hill, the
old parish and the school. We've traveled quite a bit
around the world in our lifetimes. We've met people
who know Mission Hill. Whenever you run into such



The cast of Pilate's Daughter, 1901

people, the memory of Mission Hill comes back and means more than anything else. I think it's the shrine, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and the devotion to that. What it stands for binds a lot of people."

KAY BOVAIRD lives on Iroquois Street, a tree-lined way near the top of Parker Hill lined with one- and two-family houses. She works hard to support her four children and to keep her house up.

"I've lived on Mission Hill more or less since I was born. Roxbury was a segregated neighborhood then, not racial-wise, but barrier-wise. We didn't play with the kids in the Project, the Project didn't play with the kids on the Hill, and the kids from Roxbury

Crossing didn't associate with the boys and girls from the other areas. They called the Hill 'lace-curtain Irish' because they thought they were better than everybody else. It really wasn't that, it was just that you stayed in the area where you grew up.

"The Inner Belt, I-95, that was supposed to come in took over everything down in Roxbury Crossing. There used to be a theater, the old Prince of the Plaza. For a quarter on Saturdays, or 15 cents, you could go to the movies. On Saturday night it was 50 cents. And we had some luncheonettes; the Shell, a Waldorf, the Monte Carlo Restaurant—it wasn't the run-of-the-mill place. Even after I got married I used to take the children there on Sundays for dinner and a movie. There was Dr. Kael's office, where I worked as a dental

assistant for six years when I got out of high school. There was a five and dime, a shoe store, an army and navy store, a dry goods store, and Hunt's Drug Store. Beyond that, on the corner of what is called New Dudley Street now, was the Kennedy Store and the Moran Memorial. Station Ten used to be there and there were quite a few barrooms in the area. We used to have Sharaff's, where Boston State is. We had a Howard Johnson's right at the bottom of St. Alphonsus Street. We used to have a bowling alley, up at Brigham Circle, and another one on the other side of Roxbury Crossing. But now the kids have nothing, absolutely nothing.

"Five years ago, when I started to get very active in the community a group of people had already gotten together in an organization called MUNIT. We were very upset about the high-rises being built down by the church, the Whitney Complex. And around the time MATH was formed, in 1969, we organized the Mission Hill Parents Association. Mary Fleming and I were co-chairmen of the group. We worked with the parents and their children to keep the kids in the area occupied. We never had more than two or three hundred dollars. We had a Halloween party and a Christmas party for the children. The brothers from LaSalette in Roswich baked a great big cake for them. We went to Parker Brothers and negotiated a deal with them for a little over a hundred dollars and bought games for everybody. The mothers made cupcakes. Mary and I also worked with the Park Department to get them to fix up the park at the top of the Hill. They finally put the park in after we sat-in at the Mayor's office.

"I would like to see the community stop having a negative outlook on everything, to say, 'this is our community, we're going to fight for it.' I like to see people who want to stay here. Buying houses, bringing up their families. I'm not wary of newcomers. I think we've had an awful lot of nice people move in who have taken an interest in the community. They like it here, they want to do something with it. The newcom-

ers have been just that little bit of fire that we needed. I get mad at people who say, 'they haven't lived here that long.' Anyone that's interested enough in the community to fight for it has lived here long enough for me.

"There's something about Mission Hill. Most people nowadays don't like getting involved. But people here care about you—if you don't come around for a while they wonder what happened to you. Even the new people that have moved in. One young man said to me, 'It seems to me once you get into Mission Hill, it gets a hold on you.'"

A mother of three children, MARY KEMP embodies the neighborly spirit of Mission Hill. Around her kitchen table friends share food and news of the community. Her deep attachment to the church has kept her in Mission Hill, where her children can attend Mission Grammar School.

"My family has been in Mission Hill over a hundred years. My children are fourth generation on the Hill. My grandmother was born on Parker Street and her parents came from Ireland. She went to Charlestown when she was first married and decided that she wasn't happy there. So Grandma and Grandpa bought a house on Hillside Street. They lived on the second floor and when my father married, he automatically moved into the first floor, where my two brothers and two sisters were raised. My mother died when I was born, and my grandmother just moved us all up to the second floor.

"I remember my grandmother telling a story about this friend of the family. He had a daughter that had been crippled since birth. He brought her every Wednesday to the Novena and one day she went to the shrine on her crutches, put her crutches on the shrine and walked away. There was no medical explanation for it.

"When I was in high school, I was an usherette at the novenas and we used to get twenty, twenty-five thousand people on a Wednesday. The majority of children in my generation went to Mission Grammar

HURRAH FOR THE 17TH.



TO OLD AMORY GROVE



ALL THE BOYS AND GIRLS ARE GOING, AND
THEIR PARENTS, TOO, AND ALL THE YOUNG
PEOPLE, OF COURSE.

Grand Spring Outing

OF THE CHILDREN OF THE MISSION CHURCH,
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL,
ASSISTED BY THE YOUNG MEN'S MISSION
CHURCH ASSOCIATION,

• Saturday, June 17th, 1893.

Tickets, for Adults, 25c., for Children, 15c.

SPECIAL FEATURES.

A Grand Parade headed by several companies of the Young Mission Church Guards, a Prize Drill, Base-Ball Matches, Races and Popular Sports, Grand Chorus of National Songs, by the Girls of the Junior Holy Family. A large dancing-floor will be laid and spacious tents erected.

School and High School. Most of our social activities revolved around the highschool. You went to school dances, basketball games, football games. The school dances were hysterical, because we were brought up in a 'co-institutional' highschool, where there was an invisible wall between the boys' half and the girls' half of the school, and all of a sudden you had co-ed dances. The girls lined up on one side of the hall, the boys on the other.

"Unfortunately I'm the last of the Mohicans on the Hill. The rest of my family has migrated to the suburbs. I get a little static from the older generation to get my children out of here—that it's not a desirable place to raise children. But I think it's an excellent place to raise children. They get a broader outlook on life and they see differences in people and their backgrounds.

"What started this whole area going downhill was the building of the high-rises on Tremont and St. Alphonsus streets. The population in the area where they are now was very close-knit, in three-deckers, and everybody knew everybody else. But the BRA tore it down. I understand there was an agreement between the church and the builders that they would build some low- or middle-income housing. They didn't live up to their end of the bargain and the apartments were too expensive that none of the people could afford to return there. And I'm not sure that they would want to. They were used to their type of life. A great number of parishioners were put out of the parish because of the high-rises. There's another thing that's wrong with this neighborhood—many absentee landlords. If I could afford it, I'd buy this building. I don't say that my children will stay here; they probably won't. But I like the familiarity of it, being able to walk down the street and see things that I've seen all my life. My grandmother wasn't involved in the church socially, but she relied on it. It was comforting for her to know it was there. Today, it's kind of scary to think that some day it

might not be there. If you can look out and see the twin spires, everything's all right."

BERNARD AND EILEEN FITZGERALD are raising the last of their seven children in their home on Sunset Street. Family members have always participated in community activities, and Bernie feels this has had a powerful effect on his children.

"I was born on Terrace Street and I lived in quite a few apartments around the Hill and finally came to this house 26 years ago. Growing up was completely different in my time. You wouldn't have to notify the neighbors that you needed help. Somehow or other the word would get out. Maybe it was because the times were tough that everybody figured they'd help each other. When something tragic would happen to a family down the street, especially a death, the family was too busy making arrangements for the funeral. A neighbor would come over and take down every curtain in the house. Another might come and clean the whole house and sweep it all out and beat the rugs. Another neighbor would make a batch of bread and another one might cook up a ham. And before the body was laid out in the house the curtains were all back up, the house was clean, and there was food on the table.

"Whenever anybody on this Hill had troubles that couldn't be solved, they would go down to the rectory and speak to one of the priests. There was an undertaker in this area some years ago who said to me, 'I've seen a lot of things happen around here, but if it weren't for those guys down there on Tremont Street, a lot of the people from this area would be in a nut house.' So they did have a great effect on the community.

"The son or daughter of Irish immigrant parents couldn't help but realize their parents had come to this country because of suffering in the Old Country, because of the lack of work and any chances of advancement over there. It was in their minds that they should seek security, which was helpful in some ways, but I



Graduation from the Mission Church Grammar School, 1919.

think the 'land of opportunity' offered more. People who lived on Mission Hill worked in a number of places, but mostly the men worked in hospitals and for the City of Boston and government, state and federal.

Many worked in paper mills at the foot of the Hill, the First National Store, and the breweries. My father was a stationary engineer and fireman in the breweries for years.

"But I say about my people that they don't make them like that anymore. Especially my mother. My mother had to work during the Depression. My father was working only two or three days a week just keeping the machinery in shape at the brewery, hoping that eventually the brewery would reopen and he would be there fulltime again. He would bring home \$15 a week. So my mother worked for three families in Brookline, two days a week for each family, and brought home more money than he did. She worked six hours a day, raised eight children, took in cousins from Ireland, did all the laundry by hand, all the baking, and all the cooking.

"There were peddlers along the Hill. I can remember three. Mike Sigrie and Mike Hannifan—he was a distant cousin of mine—and another fellow who was Italian. They usually carried a barrel of fish with them on Fridays, before they changed the Church Law. Louis Schneider, the ragman, was always around. It seems like Louis was here from the day I was born practically until I hit 40. He was up and down the street, picking up rags or metal. Some people said he owned a string of apartments out on Commonwealth Avenue.

"Christmas was the biggest day of the year. At Mission Church the midnight Masses upstairs and downstairs were so crowded that they'd have to close the doors and keep the people out. The whole back of the main altar was completely enshrouded in Christmas trees that went up 25 feet and all of the side altars were the same. You could smell the pines in the chapel. On each pillar there were at least four long strings of laurel hanging down. And loads of wreaths and lots of poinsettias. That's all gone, too.

"Mission Hill is a beautiful place, especially in the summertime. The air is always good up here. It's so accessible to every place you want to go, no matter where you want to travel, west, east, north, south. It's just a great place to live."

KAY AND ANN GALLAGHER *live together on Bucknam Street on the back of the Hill in the house where they grew up. Kay works at Alcoa and Ann, who is younger, teaches elementary school at Columbia Point. Both have become involved in their neighborhood again after a long lapse.*

KAY—"My family moved to this house in June 1928. Jim, the oldest child, had been born the October before and I was born the next October. My mother had Dad and she had two babies to care for, and then Uncle Pat and Uncle John came the next year, in April, 1929."

ANN—"Around here, everybody worked a couple of days a week during the Depression. Mr. Gilligan and Mr. Coty worked for the Elevated, so they worked all the time. Mr. Baker worked for a foundry a couple of days a week. And the breweries opened up just in time for Mr. Kelly upstairs to start working. Mr. Bowen, who lived on the third floor, was a fisherman. He'd be gone all week on the boats. There were many public employees; not big jobs, but they managed. That's why the people over the Hill say we were 'the people that had shoes.' True, but nobody is saying how much cardboard was inside of them."

KAY—"Dad was a welder. He always got sick when he worked on galvanized metal—he'd get a terrible fever. The only thing Mum could get to break the fever was liquor. It was during Prohibition and she'd sneak up the street to the bootlegger in the dead of night and bring the liquor home, and pour it into him. He'd sweat all the next day, but he'd be fine after that. But one time, in 1942, he got sick and in a matter of three weeks, he just died."

ANN—"Dad had already registered us at Mission High before he got sick and we weren't sure where the money was going to come from to pay tuition. Around Thanksgiving Mum said, 'Uncle Pat came in and the Navy Yard took up a collection for your dad. We have enough money so you can go to Mission High.' It was like manna from heaven."

KAY—"Christmas after Dad died was a sad Christmas. Dad had made a big thing out of Christmas. The Christmas the war broke out, when Dad was still alive, every window in the house had a red wreath with a candle in it hanging from the sash, we had lights in every window. The second Christmas without Dad we had blackouts and weren't allowed any lights. The money from the Navy Yard had tided us over the first Christmas but this Christmas things were tight. My mother needed any extra money for food. But the kids had to have presents and so Christmas Eve, Mary, the sister next to me, and I went to the 'five and dime' on Centre Street. We had a dollar to get something for Ann and Francie because they were the youngest. Mary cried and put on a show for the guy and we got two dolls for a dollar.

"Before Dad died, Mum would get up at 5:30 in the morning and make lunch and cook breakfast, usually bacon and eggs, and send the men off to work. She had different days that she did things—Monday was wash day and she probably baked all day Tuesday. Wednesday they always had company because Wednesday was novena day. They all went to the Mission Church for novena, Wednesday morning at nine o'clock. Then Mum might go out for the day. She might go over to Dudley Street to Timothy Smith, a department store. She did her food shopping right in the neighborhood."

KAY—"When we were young, we used to play in the field across the street. There was very little empty space on the back of the Hill then, and the houses were especially close on Lawn Street. As far as you could see, there were just porches. In winter we did a lot of sledding. Bucknam Street goes straight up and down the Hill, so it was a good slope, and there weren't many cars to get in our way.

"For the last twenty years, Mission Hill residents have been frightened out of their minds by urban renewal. The other big scare was when the City started with the in-fill business in 1968. They were going to take a half-acre of land and put 24 four-bedroom

apartments on it—overlooking a factory, with no play ground, no front, no back. That's immoral! All subsidized—\$300 a month but the developer was going to make a scad on it."

ANN—"We received a letter one Thursday, all about in-fill housing. We went to a public hearing and asked a few pertinent questions. There were about 24 zoning regulations that they wanted to be excused from. So we came home and worked Friday and Saturday making phone calls, calling engineers we knew, getting ammunition. That's how we got involved in the neighborhood again, because we had really not bothered with it for some time. The Ruggles Street Church would like to get rid of their land here and we helped plan some apartments we'd like to see built."

KAY—"All together there's 25 acres. That's a lot of new houses. Our idea is to build, but not another housing project. John Sharratt, our community architect, is planning the apartments and I've said to John 'when we build housing, why can't we build a family apartment downstairs and two senior citizen apartments upstairs? A family which can't afford a mortgage could afford to keep a house with two rentals.' We want to work it so we have a viable neighborhood with a shopping center and a garage to take the cars off the street. You can't crush people into little spaces and expect them to be healthy. We do have a lot of land and it can be done well. With backyards. Maybe it's just a dream, but a better idea than anything I've ever heard."

HATTIE KELTON bought her house on Lawn Street when she and her family moved to the 'back' of Mission Hill. A black woman in her forties, Hattie quickly became involved in neighborhood politics and has become very attached to the community in the few years she has resided there.

"I've lived on the back of the Hill for four years now. I lived in Bromley-Heath for 17 years before that. We go to the United Baptist Church on Centre Street. The children go to Sunday School there, but my church is



The back of Mission Hill and the Highland Spring Brewery where many residents worked, circa 1890

People's Baptist, on Camden Street. The neighborhood is near my job at the Hennigan School.

"In 1965 I did a survey around here for Head Start and it was all houses. After that, Lahey and Ruggles started knocking them down. They talked people into selling the houses. There were stores around—on this corner there was a store. All down the block along Leath Street were stores and barrooms. It was like a little shopping center.

"There is a black-owned nursing home on Fisher Avenue, the Resthaven. It's been there for years; it's an old home, and now it has a new building. It used to be a big, old, white house, but it's nice now. It's also integrated now. When I was growing up, people in Boston put the elderly in it. It was the only black nursing home there was.

"I've always been active. When I lived in the project I was in the United Voters' League and here I became a member of the Back of the Hill group. The first thing I got involved in was cleaning up vacant lots on Saturdays. I like the open fields, but still, I say, maybe one day the neighborhood will be built up. And it will be an even nicer place to live."

CHAT GUNTER moved to Mission Hill eight years ago with a group of friends. Since then, he has chosen to make Mission Hill a more permanent home, and the barriers between long time residents and young people like Chat are disappearing, as the community has become more diverse.

When I first moved to Mission Hill, in 1967, I lived on Eldora Street, a fantastic little elbow street just off Hillside. We had a house with three apartments. We didn't have too much to do with the older residents



View of Huntington and Longwood areas from the Mission Church tower, 1878

then. Once though, in the snow, I parked in a place that somebody had dug out. The guy hollered at me, but after that he and I used to help each other dig our parking places whenever there was a snowstorm.

I left the other side of the Hill and lived down on Linden Street, on the other side of Heath Street. Then I found a place on Wensley Street and got active in the Mission Hill Food Coop. Everyone in the neighborhood was in the coop, and out of it came organization. The Back of the Hill Organizing Committee grew out of this. There was active people who had lived here a long time and some political types who fit in with the neighborhood people. This was 1970, 71, and there was a lot of energy. There is land that is owned by the Ruggles Street Baptist Church and the Lahey Clinic, and between the two of them they had destroyed over half the

neighborhood to build things they never built. They left a lot of empty space.

The institutions have full-time people making twenty, thirty thousand dollars a year as planners and developers and we have to work nights to counteract that. And the BRA doesn't speak for us. I think it's amazing, given how small a populace we have in the neighborhood, how incredibly well-formulated our ideas and plans are. That has been the central issue in our neighborhood, trying to preserve what is left and make something decent and good for the neighborhood.

THERESA PARKS is a cheerful, attractive woman who works at Shea's Cleaners—the hub of the informal network of communication in the community. She and her husband, Bob, are

aders in the new politics of Mission Hill. Here she traces the development of community resistance to the expansion of Harvard Medical School.

"I was born in Jamaica Plain. I moved into Mission Hill when I was five years old. So I went to Mission Grammar and Mission High and I knew most of the people. Prior to the time that Harvard started buying up houses in the neighborhood, they had been privately owned. A couple would buy a house and then when the children got married one of them would move in on another floor. It was a very close-knit neighborhood and the property was well taken care of. And then Harvard purchased these homes. They wanted the land to build the Affiliated Hospital; they didn't want to be landlords. The property started to go down and the houses deteriorated rapidly.

"About five years ago Harvard sent out notices to the effect that, 'We're sorry to inform you that we have been buying up the houses to build an Affiliated Hospital center and you will have to vacate.' There was no promise of relocation. I was very upset because I have our children in school and I walk across the street to work. And my mother lives with me, and she's been in the parish for a long time and was very concerned about moving. I talked to the neighbors and they were upset too, but they didn't know what to do about it—how do you fight Harvard? Students who knew that Harvard was planning to build the Hospital Complex came out canvassing door to door and spoke with us and asked us what we intended to do. The students would come over on Saturday and we'd go door to door and I'd say, 'I'm Mrs. Parks and I live in the neighborhood . . .'

"I was bound and determined I wasn't going to move. At first my husband thought we better find a place to live, we certainly couldn't fight Harvard. But he convinced him and he ended up being elected president of the Roxbury Tenants of Harvard, the first and only one. One of the first things the tenants did when they organized was to demand that Harvard agree to

first priority in renting apartments. They would have to do some kind of rehab, too. We had a demonstration and took Dean Ebert of Harvard Medical on a tour of the neighborhood. We showed him what deplorable conditions the apartments were in and how they had not been taken care of. We called the newspapers and the TV stations and got all the publicity out of it that we could. And out of that demonstration, rents were frozen, Harvard did rehab, put new roofs on if it was necessary, put new gutters on, did a little painting.

"Cardinal Cushing had sold Harvard a 13 1/2-acre piece of property on Huntington Avenue, which used to be the Good Shepherd Convent, for a million dollars. They knocked the convent down and they park cars in there. Eventually new housing for the community will be built there. We agreed that Kempton Street and half of St. Alban's Road would be included in what is referred to as the Convent Site, where the new housing is going to be built. When we agreed to the convent site, we also said that the remaining housing needed something done and Harvard agreed to a complete rehab without any increase in rent. Which was very nice.

"The neighborhood is still predominantly old residents. The people who owned the houses, when they sold, often stayed and felt very bad. Different people I talked to said, 'I feel funny about coming to the meetings because I owned my house and I sold.' My answer was that people that sold can't be criticized because, after all, how many times in a lifetime is somebody going to offer you \$70,000 for a house? Everybody who lives in the area is officially a member of RTH.

"RTH works with other groups on the Hill. We have a Mission Hill Health Movement. The Affiliated Hospital had to go for a Certificate of Need and people on that Board worked around the clock doing all kinds of research to stop the hospital from getting it. I think when the new housing is built and the old houses are fixed up, it'll be really a nice neighborhood where people enjoy living. It wasn't easy and there were times

when we were really disappointed and thought, is it all worthwhile? I must say the irony of the whole thing is that Harvard's out to build this great hospital and they are putting pressure on families that's hard to deal with. It isn't good for your health, believe me."

KATHY LEONARD, MAUREEN JELLOE, AND KATIE HARRIS are native Mission Hillers, in their twenties. Maureen and Katie are sisters; they live with their husbands in the same three-decker on Carmel Street. Kathy Leonard lives with her family on Hillside Street, in the house her grandfather bought in the 1880s.

DAN WELDON, KEVIN FITZGERALD AND CHARLES MCCARTHY grew up together in Mission Hill and all of them have strong feelings about staying in the community and building its future. Danny has recently bought a home on Eldora Street for himself, his wife, Judy, and their infant daughter. Here all six reminisce about their shared childhood and speculate about the adaptations necessary for the future.

DANNY—"If there is such a thing as being a city kid, a city person, I think living on Mission Hill will bring it out. Mission Hill has a lot to offer, anywhere from getting involved in community theater to local politics, raising your family, owning your home, education in this city. There was Little League, tag rush in the streets, large families—there were thousands of kids around."

KEVIN—"One of the greatest things about being a city kid is your dependence on your imagination. We didn't have lots of facilities. We relied on each other's friendships. And we could turn an empty house into a haunted house, a fortress, a castle—whole days and months could revolve around an empty house. Parker Hill Avenue, Stockwell Street over to Wait Street, in that whole area, you'd have fifty kids playing. You could be in alleys, you could be on roofs."

MAUREEN—"It was different for girls then. Looking back on it now, I think girls were more passive. They observed. They sat on the steps and watched the boys play. I'm surprised we're not all four hundred pounds

because all I ever did was sit on somebody's steps or hang on the corner."

KATIE—"Friday and Saturday nights when we were in high school all the girls met and all the boys met and everyone landed at the Deli at Brigham Circle. The boys would stand where the rotary is and the girls would stand near the stores. For three to four hours we just went in and out of the Deli, bought a piece of cheesecake and a cup of coffee. Towards the end of the evening the boys would walk over and ask the girls to walk home. You walked home, said goodnight, and that was it—until you got an established steady."

KEVIN—"We got our enjoyment, our thrills, in little ways. This guy had an ice and oil truck and on Saturday mornings in the summertime he'd leave about 7 a.m. Some people would get there at five in the morning, just to be number one, but by 7 o'clock there would be fifteen, eighteen kids out there. To go out in that truck was like going out on a voyage. It was like going across the world, even though you were only going to Jamaica Plain. You'd be lugging blocks of ice and a little oil and all that you got for it was a couple of doughnuts at Ellie's. But to us it was tremendous."

KATHY—"It was a closed society. Everybody was Catholic and everybody went to parochial school. When I graduated from Mission High there were only 400 kids in the school, 99 kids in my class. It wasn't hard to know everybody."

MAUREEN—"Most people that lived here were not only Catholics but were Irish, so you never knew anybody that was different from you. It was a big change when you went to college or nursing school or got a job, and found that the rest of the world wasn't the same."

DANNY—"You were expected to go to parochial school. It's a part of a tradition, or a heritage of what it was like to grow up around here. There were always things you looked forward to at certain ages, seeing the older kids and saying 'I can't wait 'til I'm in the eighth grade. Because then I'm on top of the pile.'"

KEVIN—"My father said to me once, 'I go to wor



Back Bay from Parker Hill Reservoir, 1910

and talk to fellow workers and their son's a doctor, their son's a lawyer and he's making thirty grand. What's wrong with my kids? I send them to college and Bernie's a probation officer, Danny wants to work construction, Brian's going to be a nurse, and you're a social worker.' This is what we have to offer in staying here, to build and strengthen our neighborhood. And this is a matter of life and death in this neighborhood. It's a matter of life and death to ourselves."

KATHY—"I think there's hope. People are accepting the fact that most urban neighborhoods are going through periods of change, and they are seeking solutions. There are many organizations that are working for improvement. Maybe they don't enjoy membership from the majority of residents that live here, but people who have always lived here are starting to revive the neighborhood—even theater. At one time we thought St. Alphonse Hall was the world capital of theater. Then for a long time it wasn't used. Suddenly a group revitalized it. People join organizations that stimulates others to join. It becomes social, you're working together. It's got a spirit, like cheering for the football team."

DANNY—"If the City loses its neighborhoods, that's the end of us. The city was built up around neighborhoods. It began as a little section downtown. It annexed Southie, it annexed Hyde Park, it annexed the

town of Roxbury. Now this place is changing. Now people are beginning to think about community; community power, community brotherhood."

MAUREEN—"I love the city: I married someone from Mission Hill and I like living here. But sometimes I wonder if I'm doing the right thing staying here. I have an eight-year old son, Brendan. He's restricted because he's been assaulted twice. But I'm happy with him being at Mission Grammar. He's in the band, he's playing hockey, he's an altar boy, and he used to take swimming lessons. There are drawbacks but he's exposed to a variety of things."

KEVIN—"The spirit of neighborhoods is 'families.' Because without families you lose communication. It's a tragedy that the first solution to crime, for a family or an individual, is to flee. It's not a long-term solution. They're only buying time."

"I think the difference between life and death is that living means people speak to one another and have something in common; that they share experiences, that they work in a theater group together or just say 'hi' in the street. If everyone decided to leave Mission Hill and professional people moved in, more apartment dwellings were built, and it became more of an inner city place, Mission Hill would lose its life and its identity and would cease to be Mission Hill."



The Seventh Grade classes at the Mission Grammar School, 1897



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BOSTON enjoys an international reputation as the birthplace of our American Revolution. Today, as the nation celebrates its 200th anniversary, that struggle for freedom again draws attention to Boston. The heritage of Paul Revere, Sam Adams, Faneuil Hall and Bunker Hill still fire our romantic imaginations.

But a heritage is more than a few great names or places—it is a culture, social history and, above all, it is people. Here in Boston, one of our most cherished traditions is a rich and varied neighborhood life. The history of our neighborhood communities is a fascinating and genuinely American story—a story of proud and ancient peoples and customs, preserved and at the same time transformed by the American urban experience.

So to celebrate our nation's birthday we have undertaken to chronicle Boston's neighborhood histories. Compiled largely from the oral accounts of living Bostonians, these histories capture in vivid detail the breadth and depth of our city's complex past. They remind us of the most important component of Boston's heritage—people, which is, after all, what the Bicentennial is all about.

KEVIN H. WHITE, *Mayor*



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